

# NOMONONO CHROME

artcars by Jaime Gili

*“Customers can have a car painted any colour, so long as it is black”*. The famous phrase was recollected by **Henry Ford** in his own biography in 1922 -almost a hundred years ago- and yet the fear of colour reflected and mocked there, still comes alongside the automotive industry. More than a hundred years on, still our roads are most commonly filled with diverse but reduced tones of greys, whites and blacks. Despite this, or because of it, cars have historically attracted certain artists, as ideas or as objects, configuring a story that begins at the time of the Italian futurists and the **Citroën B12** that **Sonia Delaunay** painted in 1924.

One of these artists is **Jaime Gili**, known for making paintings that investigate colour beyond the limits of the canvas. For over a decade he has exhibited internationally, often including and taking over space and architecture, manipulating it and introducing new dynamics to it. He has made murals in private homes and public spaces, and public art that takes over large spaces in various cities of the world.

His work has always contained an interest in speed and its representation, an investigation that starts from that futurist root and the optical and kinetic art from the 1950s that is so important in Latin American abstraction. Add to this his family connection with the automotive industry, and we will understand that **Nomonochrome** was a project bound to happen.

Gili has said jokingly that he had to start his own series as he “couldn't wait until old age to be invited to make a BMW Art Car”, referring to the programme which has existed since 1975 and which began with a car from 1972, the same year Gili was born. Artists such as **Frank Stella, Alexander Calder, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol** were invited to paint on their contemporary **BMW** models. The idea of Gili's **Nomonochrome** project is instead to work with selected classics or recent classics, and accept commissions just like in any other part of **Jaime Gili's** oeuvre.

The first car in the series of was a **Volkswagen Golf Mk1 Cabriolet** from 1992. The lines of the design of this model of **Volkswagen** always attracted Gili, and this very specific work

adapts to the shape of the car and subtly enhances and highlights some of its curves through primary colour combinations, whilst creating new points of visual tension. The seemingly all-straight-line design perfectly follows the slight curves of the body, whereas the colour palette refers to the beginnings of Modernist geometric abstraction.

The artist started the series with the idea that the cars chosen would all be important in his life, and would include childhood dreamcars, but commissions in the shape of cars like the **BMW335i cabrio** have been done recently at the AMT workshop of Toni Chinchilla. This was added to the **Nomonochrome** list of artcars: A 1972 **Seat 600** was completed and sold in 2019 and a **Porsche 356SC** was done in 2020 and is now in an important Spanish-based collection. More recently an **Authi Mini (British Leyland)** from 1971 was completed which is now in London, a car for which custom interior mats have also been created.

With his interest in abstraction and expanded painting and architecture, Gili's work has been described as following the Latin American modernist tradition of integration of the arts, specially of painting and architecture which was so present in the building of certain countries in the mid 20th Century. Gili was born in Caracas in 1972 from Catalan parents, and has lived in London since studying at the Royal College of Art in 1996. He also studied in Caracas, Barcelona and Paris. He has had solo exhibitions in London, New York, Miami, Barcelona, Madrid and Zurich, amongst other cities. His large scales public art pieces can be seen in London, Miami, Portland and Caracas.

## STIRRING CHROMATISM

Robin Mann

*“More and more abstracted from its social function of transportation, while thoroughly enclosing that function in archaic modalities - it is transformed, reformed and metamorphosed madly, within the impassable limits of an acquired structure. A whole civilisation could be arrested at the stage of the automobile.”*

-Jean Baudrillard, *Système des Objets* (1968)

I've had the great pleasure of working with **Jaime Gili** (b.1972, Caracas) for some years now, throughout which there has been a pervasive shared passion for both painting and cars. It is with great pleasure then, that the exhibiting of these two magnificent automobiles, a 1992 **Mk1 Golf** and a 2007 **BMW 335i Cabriolet**, allows for a brief indulgence into the marrying of the two.

In the case of the **Golf**, Gili's first foray into the Artcar, this Neo-Classic sits proudly cloaked in De Stijlian tri-colour (think **Mondrian** and **van Doesburg's** reductive abstraction) –as the title of the wider project **NoMonoChrome** suggests, the refusal of atonal monotony triumphs in the form of articulated primary reds, blues and yellows.

It perhaps comes as no surprise that Gili has an on-going artistic wager to pit his painting alongside automobiles, or at least speed: growing up during the 70s and 80s his father worked making the standard wheels for the companies that assembled cars in Venezuela, and through unwitting osmosis passed down a working relationship with functional mobility; later his MA dissertation written during his time at the Royal College of Art would be titled *Speed and Painting*, which a lyrical inquiry into the relation of art and cars in the 20th century. He is then, no stranger to the dichotomous potential.

The **Golf** itself, with its angular straight lines a product of designer Karmann, is the perfect “canvas” for Gili's most recognisable style of practice: modernist shards of shifting colour harmony. The metal panels appear like a board game of early futurism versus Mid-Century kineticism: symmetrical in line but not in colour. It's a painting ready to move at pace in the city.

Gili's process begins with sketching on the computer, devising embryonic colour combinations, after which the car is taped up much in the same way his works on canvas come to being; (perhaps tweaked); and ultimately painted. This final application takes place hand in hand with renowned body-shop expert and metalwork painter **Toni Chinchilla** in an industrial alcove of Barcelona. His understanding of car centric paint concurrent to Gili's time honoured vision combine in his workshop to bear the fruits of the two cars today. Unlike modern car wraps or even Race Car livery, which are churned out of a machine based on a calculated 3D visualisation, Gili's car compositions reflect the human eye and a drawn action; they respond directly to their given contoured surface.

This is particularly evident in the case of the **BMW 335i**, Gili's second Artcar, and in this case a commission. Here, gone are the straight quoins of colour evocative of 80's design, and smoother swathes of colour follow the machined curves of the Cabrio Bimmer. Gili plainly responds to the design of the car prior to laying down the paint: the cars of today / the **BMW 335i** with their bulbous curves and muscular tails would jar against the angular lines found on the **Golf**, and vice versa.

The **335i** is an undeniably fast car, with aggressive notes to the nose, there is no real need to create the sense of speed, it's already there. Think of the fabric of this car as the existing left hand bass in a musical score, and Gili's design as the right hand treble leading melody. The two work together in harmony and trundle along in a sort of **Neo-Krautrock** anthem.

Conversely, the relatively diminutive **Golf**, whilst no means short of breath on the road, wears a crystalline tone-pattern, perfectly in tune with its dynamic shape. Each block of colour can be considered one of multiple Go Faster Stripes. The latter were a tool cars of the era, employed to convey a sense of speed to the car as object, the

ALUMES GOLF'S ART CARS

EFG

## THE COLOUR BARRIER

It's a car that's been painted in a way that's never been done before. The Aston Martin DB6 is a classic car that's been painted in a way that's never been done before. The Aston Martin DB6 is a classic car that's been painted in a way that's never been done before.

**F**irst, it's a classic car. It's a classic car that's been painted in a way that's never been done before. The Aston Martin DB6 is a classic car that's been painted in a way that's never been done before.

The choice of colours is reductive for a painting, but broad for a car.

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The choice of colours is reductive for a painting, but broad for a car.

Arte en movimiento

The choice of colours is reductive for a painting, but broad for a car.

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STUDIO

# Cultures

## Un cotxe també pot ser una obra d'art

REPORTATGE DE CARL GILBERTSON I G. JORDAN

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El cotxe també pot ser una obra d'art

idea of velocity being attained through stillness, or as urbanist and theorist **Paul Virilio** would say: Rushing Standstill.

**Virilio** speaks of “speed” only in conjunction with inertia, the alter ego of high velocity mobility. He claims that speed does not come without inertia, therefore establishing a close relation between mobility and immobility; for him though, the standstill always awaits the traveller, at the end of any mobilization process. In this way Gili’ cars as objects concur entirely; the car exhibited is motionless, nonetheless in a ferociously dynamic glory.

During the 1920s **Henry Ford** made it clear to prospective owners, their new cars could come in any colour: as long it was black. Now, despite the last 90 years having undoubtedly seen countless colours makes it from swatch to metal on the cars we drive, a recent Dupont survey of “car colours from the USA” through the decades, proves that since the year 2000 there has been a return to the prevalence of the colour black and grey in car production. Once again, it seems we’re in the midst of the colour-fearing:

*“Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity”*

David Batchelor, excerpt from Chromophobia (2000)

It is with great relief that Jaime Gili, an artist whose main preoccupation is colour, brightens up an otherwise dreary world preoccupied with capitalist money saving on an industrial scale.

So are these subjects in question Car or Art? This is an on-going issue, and indeed a driving force behind the project for Gili. Consider architecture, which has an underlying function (which has to be fulfilled), but is changed or transposed depending on the context within which it is to be received or appropriated. How then, is the graphic adornment of cars, which have a basic function of mobility, any different to those most ambitious architectural feats? Well for start, buildings themselves cannot, and will not end up in a museum. If, in the face of control of global emissions traditional petrol cars on the roads are destined



The Porsche 356SC in the Cabin

to become electric, then the likes of (neo) classics are ultimately destined themselves, to end up in a museum - a rarefied relic in which past generations carelessly sped around. These Artcars indubitably share more in common with prized artworks than with the surely doomed daily drivers.

Not content simply with the current point of discourse of paintings versus cars, it must be noted that Gili’ own work extends to the parameters of architecture itself: since 2005 he has undertaken numerous public and private architectural commissions, whereby both interior and public outdoor spaces are activated by his chromatic schemes. Victorian train stations; baseball practice grounds; Industrial storage tanks are just some of the scenes of Gili’ architectonic appropriation – ceiling corners become fluid intersections; metal posts roving as the individuals that lean on them; and boarded up windows transform to colour coded sign systems like beacons throughout the city.

The hobby of classic cars though is ridden with the term Trailer Queen - that is to say prized automobiles that are ferried to and from museums to exhibition events, without ever turning a wheel. These aren’t necessarily art cars, but cars that considered by many to be works of art.

There is though, no arguing that Gili’s **Golf** and **BMW**, are both car, and art. It’ worth mentioning that in the world of classic cars, originality is key, and in the case of preservation or restoration this includes retention of the factory colour –Gili’s work is Action-Painting for the Petrol-heads.

It was only recently that **Gili** shared his praise for **Sonia Delaunay's** early 20th century modification of a 1923 **Citroën B12**. She was amongst the first to recognize the fashionable potential of the car, and transposed a patchwork design onto the bullet shaped body. Nearly one hundred years later, and through Gili's magnificent automobiles, we're still left scratching our head as to the exact whereabouts their position in (art) history lies. Are these examples of a design object; functional artwork; moving painting; kinetic sculpture? For that, it would be remiss not to turn briefly to a seminal moment within the canon of the Artcar.

**Alexander Calder** is known for inventing the sculpture in motion with his weightless mobiles that played listlessly above the viewer, so it's no surprise that in 1975 he was the first of a series of commissioned artists chosen to create an artist car for **BMW**. Of **Calder's** work, **Jean Paul Sartre** summarized: *"Sculpture suggests movement; painting suggests depth or light. Calder suggests nothing. They simply are: they are absolutes"*

Just as **Calder** and **Delaunay** revealed the alternative and artistic potential for an automobile, Gili revisits the performative power of colour. **Virilio** placed speed at the core of socio-political life; so too Gili has spent his entire career searching for a means to convey motion to medium. For this project however, he instils his kinetic vocabulary into something with a pre-existing locomotive potential.

It has been argued that Performance Art depends entirely on the viewers' experience of said work in order for it to be complete –Gili's cars are that and so much more. These works are an oxymoronic phenomenon –it has rarely been such that latent mechanical stasis allows for outright chromatic flux (and that is without turning the key). For that Gili can be rest assured that his quest to resolve Speed and Painting are well underway, and his lines of force will remain long beyond the big electric takeover and the defectors become the sole domain of museful yesteryear.



Sonia Delaunay, 1923  
Alexander Calder, 1975



## Volkswagen Golf Cabriolet 1.8i Sport 1991

Painted in 2015 in AMT, Manresa, Barcelona.

The first in the series was this Mk1 cabrio Volkswagen Golf, a car Gil was interested in for its importance as a first car for many of his friends in the eighties in Europe, and especially for its straight lines, which allowed a unique design with primary colours and clean edges. The car has been exhibited in several events including VW meeting in Jarama, Madrid and Marbella Art fair.



## Volkswagen Golf Cabriolet 1.8i Sport 1991

### Specifications:

Volkswagen Golf Cabrio 1.8i Sport

manufactured or sold in 1991, version for Europe

2-door convertible body type

FWD (front-wheel drive), manual 5-speed gearbox

gasoline (petrol) engine with displacement: 1781 cm<sup>3</sup>/108.7 cui,

Advertised power: 82 kW/ 110 hp/ 112 PS (DIN)

Torque: 153 Nm /113 lb-ft

Top speed: 173 km/h (108 mph) (declared by factory)

Accelerations: 0- 60 mph 9.5s, 0- 100 km/h 10.1s (claimed),

Fuel consumption: 8.4 l/100km / 33.8 mpg (imp.) / 28.2 mpg (U.S.)

/ 12 km/l ECE-cycle;

Car is in Spain and open to enquiries.



# NOMONO CHROME



## BMW 335i 2007

Painted in 2016 at AMT, Manresa, Barcelona.

This car belongs to Toni Chinchilla, in whose workshop in Barcelona most of this project has been realised. After seeing the results of the first Artcar Gili and Chinchilla made together, the Golf, Toni put this one in the hands of Jaime to make the fastest of the series.

The car has been exhibited in several events including the Marbella Art fair.



## BMW 335i 2007

with M3 kit

Specifications:

Engine

In-line 6cyl, 2979cc, turbo

Max power302bhp/5800rpm

Max torque295lb ft/1200-5000rpm

0-605.4secs (claimed)

Top speed155mph (limited)

Car is available for sale and located in Spain







## SEAT 600 E 1972

A car from the year when Jaime was born was the third in the series. Although Gili did not grow up in Spain and even though no member of his family ever owned one, the Seat 600 was the car that popularised driving in Spain. Since the cars were made in Barcelona, this car is a homage to the beginning of the emancipation of the Spanish people in the seventies, in the form of driving.

The car has been exhibited in many events, including Seat and heritage shows in Manresa and Marbella, Spain.



## SEAT 600 E 1972

Painted in 2017 in AMT, Manresa, Barcelona.

### Specifications:

Petrol engine

4 cylinders

767cc 5.2 mkg SAE at 2,500 rpm

Bressel Carburetor 28 ICP-I with Petrol pump

Power: 25 CV at 4,800 rpm

Milleage / Consumption: 7 L /100 km

Max Speed 108 km/h

Private collection, Spain



# NOMONO CHROME



## PORSCHE 356SC

1964

Painted in 2019 in AMT, Manresa, Barcelona.

After purchasing the Seat 600, a collector in Marbella related to the textile sector, bought a Porsche 356SC to bring it to Jaime Gili and make his dream come true. After selecting from a dozen designs he chose this amazing combination of oranges and blues, reminiscent of the of first years of a psychedelic sub-cultures. The interior front panel was also painted and the car looks and drives like a dream whenever is exhibited.



## PORSCHE 356SC

1964

Specifications:

1.6 L Type 616/16 B4

Petrol engine

4 cylinders

Top Speed :125 mph | 201.125 km/h

1581 cc | 96.5 cu in. | 1.6 L.

Power :107 BHP (78.752 KW) at 5200 RPM

767cc 5.2 mkg SAE at 2,500 rpm

Private Collection, Spain



# NOMONO CHROME



## AUTHI MINI 1000 1971

Painted in 2022 in AMT, Manresa, Barcelona.

The mini was in fact the first car Jaime wanted to paint, but it took a few years until they found a donor in such a good condition. The design follows the curves of the car, until it breaks them with the circles and crosses. This mini even comes with its own customised interior mats made by The Rug Company in London and is currently being converted to Electric by Recharged Heritage, London.



## AUTHI MINI 1000 1971

Original Specs:

998 cc Petrol engine, BMC Austin A-series 998

FWD (front-wheel drive), manual 4-speed gearbox

Cylinders alignment: Line 4

Displacement: 998 cm<sup>3</sup> / 60.8 cui

Bore: 64.58 mm / 2.54 in

Stroke: 76.2 mm / 3 in

Power : 29.5 kW / 40 hp / 40 PS ( SAE )

Torque: 70.5 Nm / 52 lb-ft, 107 BHP (78.752 KW) at 5200 RPM

Top speed: 132 km/h (82 mph)

Acceleration: 0-60 mph 19.4s; 0-100 km/h 21.9s



Car has been converted to electric in London

